

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 12237

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: UKRAINIAN POET DRECH SEES SIGN OF LITERARY RELAXATION

1. SUMMARY. IVAN DRACH, THE MUCH HONORED UKRAINIAN POET WHO WAS ONCE PROMINENT AMONG THE YOUNG DISSIDENT UKRAINIAN WRITERS OF THE EARLY 1960S, TOLD AN AMERICAN ACQUAINTANCE ON JULY 24, 1976 THAT HE DETECTED A SMALL TURN TOWARD LIBERALISM BY THE UKRAINIAN LITERARY WATCHDOGS. THE AMERICAN WAS INCLINED TO TREAT DRACH'S VIEWS WITH RESERVE, BUT NOTED THE POET'S VERY OFFICIAL STATUS AND CONNECTIONS SUGGEST HE IS WELL-INFORMED. END SUMMARY.

2. DRACH AND THE AMERICAN, A PROFESSOR OF UKRAINIAN EXTRACTION, MET IN IRKUSTK WHERE THE POET WAS PARTICIPATING WITH OTHER SOVIET WRITERS, INCLUDING UKRAINIAN PROSE AUTHOR MIKHAILO STEL'MAKH, IN AN SERIES OF PUBLIC READINGS. THE AMERICAN WAS TOURING WITH A DELEGATION. THEY MET PRIVATELY.

3. DISCUSSING THE OUTLOOK FOR UKRAINIAN WRITERS, DRACH CITED AS A FAVORABLE SIGN PUBLICATION IN "ITERATURNA UKRAINA", ONLY A FEW DAYS BEFOE, OF POETRY BY ANOTHER MAJOR DISSIDENT POET OF THE SIXTIES, LINA KOSTENKO. THE POEMS, SAID DRACH, ARE RELATED TO WARTIME EVENTS AND DO NOT REPRESENT ANY BOW TO THE AUTHORITIES. DRACH NOTED THAT KOSTENKO WAS NOT ARRESTED IN 1965, AS WERE MANY OTHER DISSIDENT WRITERS, BUT SHE HAS NOT BEEN ALLOWED TO PUBLISH FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS. DRACH FELT SURE
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KOSTENKO HAD NEVER RECALTED OR COME TO TERMS WITH THE

AUTHORITIES. PUBLICATION THUS REPRESENTS MODERATION IN THE TREATMENT OF KOSTENKO AND POSSIBLY A DEVELOPING NEW LITERARY POLICY.

4. THE AMERICAN, IN DISCUSSING THE CONVERSATION, NOTED THAT KOSTENKO'S HUSBAND IS A HIGH PARTY OFFICIAL (OTHERWISE UNIDENTIFIED) WHOM SHE MARRIED IN 1960. THE AMERICAN THEORIZED THAT THE HUSBAND MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROTECT KOSTENKO THEN AND HAVE HELPED HER TO PUBLISH NOW.

5. THE AMERICAN SAID HE HAD ASKED DRACH CIRCUITOUSLY ABOUT HIS CONSCIENCE AND FEELINGS OVER THE ROAD HE HAD CHOSEN SINCE THE '60S AND HIS STATUS TODAY. DRACH REPLIED SIMPLY THAT "AS BRECHT HAD SAID, THERE IS ONLY AS MUCH TRUTH AS A MAN CAN CARRY ON HIS BACK." THE PROFESSOR THOUGHT DRACH MEANT HE HAD DONE THE BEST HE COULD.

6. DRACH SAID HE HAD RECENTLY JOINED THE STAFF OF AN UNNAMED UKRAINIAN LITERARY JOURNAL. HE HOPED HE WOULD BE ABLE TO USE HIS PRESENCE AND INFLUENCE THERE IN FAVOR OF PUBLICATION OF YOUNG WRITERS OF PROMISE.
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